HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT • WWW.HSPD.ORG
COMMUNITY SERVICE • COLLECTIONS • ARCHIVES
FALL 2010
VOL. 17, NO. 2

The Hourglass

The Hendersons in 1942—Randall, Phil, Carl, Cliff and Dorris at Cliff's Château Avion in West Los Angeles.

Welcome to the new Historical Society of Palm Desert newsletter! I am Duchess Tomson Emerson, your new scribe, and am thrilled about it as the threads of Palm Desert history are woven deeply within me. My Mother was Dorris Henderson Tomson, the Henderson Boys' sister, and my Dad was Tommy Tomson, their brother in law and the land planning consultant/landscape architect who laid out Palm Desert. I remember, a a kid, standing with the family in 1946

CONTINUED PAGE 4...

Museum Hours

10 AM to 3 PM

on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday

Event Calendar

October 2, Saturday
Museum Reopens

October 22, Friday
Coffee & Conversations with Bob Keeran, Cochella Valley Water District. 7 PM at the Portola Community Center (at Portola & Shadow Mt.)

October 27, Wednesday
Fall luncheon, Monterey Country Club, 11:30 AM. Call 346-6588 for reservations.

October 31, Sunday
Golf cart parade on El Paseo
Halloween Extravaganza

November 13-14, Saturday & Sunday
Yard sale at HSPD, 7 AM-2 PM
Volunteers needed

November 19, Friday
Coffee & Conversations with Cheryl Schuler, history teacher at La Quinta High School. 7 PM at the Portola Community Center. "Building Bridges: Connecting Today's Students with Our Community's Past."

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This being my first letter as President of the Society reminds me of an old Danish song where the speaker talks forever and says nothing. Let us hope I do a little better.

First, let me welcome Duchess Emerson aboard as our new newsletter editor. Duchess volunteered for the job, and I think Ginny was very happy to pass the 'typewriter.' Duchess is the daughter of Tommy Tomson who laid out and landscaped Palm Desert. Duchess's mother was the sister to the Henderson boys. Duchess has a lot of history in Palm Desert, and I am sure many stories to share. She lives in Idaho now, so we will be handling everything electronically.

I want to give my utmost thanks to Ginny for her many years of service doing the newsletter. If you have been involved in organizations, you know this is one of the most difficult jobs in the organization. A side note: Ginny and Dick celebrated their 50th anniversary last spring. Side note #2: We are looking for people to work with Ginny tending the archives.

Thanks to Bev Bergh, Kermit Martin, Dick Folkers and Bob Pritchford for their service on the Board. Also, I would like to welcome Hal Rover back on the Board. Thanks also to Barbara for two outstanding years as the president. We continue to have an outstanding board with Barbara Eastes, Don Graybill, Madonna Marman, Kim Housekn, Adele Sandman, Harry Quinn, Bonnie Bowie, Louise Neeley, John Marman, Eric Vogt, Marcy Gregory, and Hal Rover.

Marcy and crew have been busy this summer fixing up the back room (barracks). They are redesigning it so that we can remove everything in less than an hour to allow for the art shows then have everything back in place shortly after the outside event.

Eric has taken control of the web site and is now keeping it up-to-date. We added a 'live' calendar so you can check on upcoming events and whatever else is going on.

Coming up in the very near future will be our Fall Opening of the Museum (10/2), Coffee and Conversation (10/22), Fall Luncheon (10/27) and the golf cart parade (10/31). Then in November we have the yard sale (11/13 & 14) and a second Coffee and Conversation (11/19). As soon as we get the details worked out, the information will be available on the web site, or give Anne a call.

Speaking of giving Anne a call, some of you may have seen that our notice for the Midsummer Madness Potluck had a strange phone number. I think we will blame that on the computer. Even with the strange phone number, we had a great turnout and some of the best food in the city. It is a good thing those dining out in the local restaurants were not aware of the food we had to offer. Kim Housken and Madonna Marman coordinated the event with a lot of help from many other people.

Before I end up like the speaker noted above, let me remind you that this is your organization and we need your help to make it run as it should. Thank you for your past participation, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

—Brett Romer

The Mission and Purpose of the Historical Society of Palm Desert (HSPD)

To preserve, record and provide access to its historical collections.

To relate an on-going history of the City through exhibits, publications, media, programs and events.

To support, with volunteer efforts, activities sponsored through the Society and co-sponsorship with other private and public agencies.

HSPD is organized as a non-profit corporation that supports its mission and purposes in a responsible manner. The Society cares for the materials and pieces in its possession as unique and irreplaceable objects of local history and strives to protect and preserve its collections for posterity.

Executive Board

Brett Romer
President

Eric Vogt
Vice President

Bonnie Bowie
Secretary

Madonna Marman
Treasurer

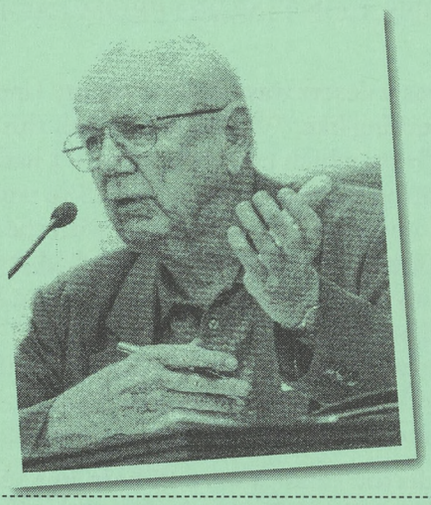
Barbara Keedy-Eastes
Past President

Board of Directors

Don Graybill
Marcy Gregory
Kim Housken
John Marman
Louise Neeley
Adele Sandman
Harry Quinn
Hal Rover

Obituaries

Notable Palm Desert lives remembered



DICK KELLY

Long Time City Council Member Dick Kelly has died at age 87. Kelly had recently been treated for bladder cancer. He was first elected to the Palm Desert City Council in 1982 serving ever since. Kelly also served as Palm Desert Mayor six times. Kelly also served on several boards and commissions and was the driving force behind the development of the Desert Willow Golf Resort. Kelly is survived by his wife of 65 years Mary Helen.

GLADYS RISEM WALDORF

Gladys Risem Waldorf, 93, passed away peacefully at Aug. 14. She made her home at Marrakesh Country Club for 26 years and was active at the Club and in the community.

In 1938 she graduated from the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks with a B.S. in Science, with a specialty in microbiology and medical technology. Gladys worked at the Jane Lamb Memorial Hospital in Clinton, Iowa where she met her husband of 65 years, Vern Waldorf.

They were married on July 16, 1940 in Bismark, North Dakota and had two children, Margaret and Dale. The couple retired in 1984 to Marrakesh.

In addition to HSPD, Gladys was a member of Alpha Phi sorority, Coachella Vally Alumni Panhellenic, Les Fleurs women's group at Marrakesh, and Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church.

JOYCE Y. WHITE

Joyce Y. White, 81, of Palm Desert passed away June 1, 2010. She was born April 16, 1929 to Thomas Foss and Muriel Fjeldsted in Blackfoot, Idaho.

Joyce married Charles F. White, Jr. on July 12, 1963 in Las Vegas, Nevada. She was a general contractor with Charles F. White, Jr., Inc. for 47 years.

Joyce was also a member of Soroptimist International of Palm Desert. She is survived by her husband, Charles F. White, Jr. of Palm Desert; daughter Linda Kenworthy of Topanga, California; sister Susan Pheley of Hayward, California; brother George A. Yager of Santa Rosa, California; and one grandson, Charles E. Kenworthy of Topanga. At Joyce's request, there were no services. In lieu of flowers, donations were suggested to HSPD.

HAROLD LESLIE BIRD JR.

Harold Leslie Bird Jr., 88, passed away on May 19 in Palm Desert. He was born to Harold Leslie Bird and Florence Voorhees Bird in Bedminster Township, New Jersey. He married Mildred (Millie) King in 1945 at Epworth Methodist Church in Washington, D.C.

Harold was a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Arizona, where he earned his Ph.D., and at the College of the Desert where he retired in 1984.

He was a Lieutenant JG in the US. Navy during World War II.

He is survived by his wife Millie Bird of Palm Desert; daughter Nancy Grant of Fremont; son Steven Sterling of Santa Maria; three granddaughters and one great granddaughter.

HENDERSONS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

out in what was a desert wasteland when my Uncle Phil said something like, "Why don't we call this Palm Desert?"—to which everyone agreed. I had a hard time figuring out what was the THIS to which he referred. Some weeks later, standing with the same family group on a sandy road which had just been graded, my Uncle Cliff said loud and clear, "One day THIS will be the smartest address on the American Desert!!" We were standing in the middle of what was to be El Paseo! Who would have dreamed? None other than Cliff Henderson.

The Henderson siblings were all born in a small town in southwest Iowa, Shenandoah, not far from Council Bluffs. Their father, Nelson Rankin Henderson, was a pharmacist; their mother, Mary Catherine Thomas Henderson, was a very busy house wife . Their first son, Harley, passed away in his first year. Randall Thomas was born on 4/12/1888. Next came Carl Rankin—12/17/1889. He was followed by Philip Thomas—11/27/1893, and the last boy, Clifford William arrived on 7/11/1895. Eight years later they had a BIG surprise—a little sister sister was born, Dorris Rowena—3/3/03. (Phil and Cliff were reading *Ivanhoe* when my mother was born, and they thought Rowena a lovely name and stuck her with it. Alas, she never agreed!)

Now for some thumbnail sketches of the boys lives BEFORE Palm Desert: It seems they livened up things in their small town with all sorts of activities, most of which I never heard in detail, but I do know that Cliff, entrepreneur that he was, organized a circus during the summer for a few years. And I have in my files a photo of him balancing on a (tight?)rope tied from the house to the garage with a broomstick firmly gripped in his hands !

I next recall that circa 1918 Randall left home for Southern California to enter the university of Southern California in Los Angeles. I imagine USC offered a good program in journalism as writing was his prime interest. He ended his years at SC as student body president. Somewhere along the line he became a pilot in those early days, and as the first person to fly into Las Vegas airport, he was recently honoured posthumously with an exhibit of his flight paraphernalia at the airport.

He then headed south to Calexico, CA where he joined a newspaper and ended up being the owner/ publisher. Some years later he started *The Desert Magazine* in Calexico where he remained until moving the magazine to the lovely pueblo buildings he build in Palm Desert.

Carl is next in line, and I don't know much of his history, neither when nor why he left Shenandoah, but he ended up in Santa Monica and Los Angeles in the late '20s. He built some lovely Spanish style places including a building to house his Packard auto sales. That building on Wilshire Blvd. in Santa Monica is still in use as an auto sales store and garage.Mercedes Benz has been there for decades, but has left the embossed—in cement—the word PACKARD on the front of the building. Carl went on to become a realtor in the Santa Monica area until he moved to Palm Desert to join his brothers.

Phil is next in line. He and Cliff must have come out to So Cal in the mid-1920s. I have never known just what Phil did in those early years, but I do know that Phil and Cliff were very close. Cliff went to USC where he made basketball a major sport and was student body president his senior year, like brother Randall. An interesting note----Cliff and probably Phil as well as my mother all attended Manuel Arts High School in Los. Angeles. But what is most notable is that Earl Warren--governor of California, Laurence Tibbetts--opera singer, and Jimmy Doolittle WWII pilot and leader of the famous Tokyo Raiders--were all in Cliff's class !!!! Truly amazing!!

In the 30's Cliff and Phil organized and managed the Cleveland National Air Races. The Thompson and Bendix trophy races with Charles Lindberg, Roscoe Turner and Jimmy Doolittle flying the planes drew great crowds .They next moved onto Las Vegas for more air races and then to Los Angeles. A landing strip was needed as well as an area for bleachers in the L.A. area and soon some bean fields were located in the Inglewood area which filled the bill. Then they called upon their new brother-in-law, Tommy, to lay out the landing strip and etc. If I have my facts right, that was the the birthplace of LAX !

I should add here that Cliff was an ambulance driver during WWI, and I can vouch for the fact that he never stopped driving like one! He also flew mail planes across the country for sometime as well

as "barnstorming" with a white scarf yet. My parents often talked of their exciting/breathtaking experiences flying in a biplane with Cliff. It was after his flying days and just before the U.S got into WWII that Cliff bought property in the budding area in West L.A. called Brentwood.It was here that he built his home which he named Chateau Avion. The house was in the Art Deco style and quite wonderful. He had gotten his first Great Dane, Carter, at this time and the two of them were the local Country Squires.Carter was not only lovable and sweet, but also elegant. (Carter preceded the well known and also beautiful and lovable Dakar.)

As the 1930s came along, it was onward and upward in their adventures, and in 1935 they built the Pan Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles. Cliff, always the entrepreneur, had his devoted, calm cool and collected Phil to keep things on an even keel. Cliff was a whirlwind, and Phil followed up by returning phone calls, paying the bills, keeping the employees happy and making sure that all the Pan activities-- The Ice Follies, the Ice Capades, the auto shows, ice hockey and basketball games, and on and on came to pass. They were a God given team.

In the mid 1940's brother Randall made it known that he' like to move his magazine publishing business up to the Coachella Valley. And at about the same time, Cliff and Phil had been considering selling the Pan Pacific. They were also thinking along the line of a new challenge.They'd heard about a beautiful "cove' of open desert where General Patton had kept his repair equipment for his tanks not too far from Palm Springs. So one thing led to another and in 1946 they pulled it all together. And Palm Desert was born.!! Tragically, Phil passed away very soon after he'd named what was to be the new town.

There are more fun and interesting things about The Henderson Boys so stay tuned for the next newsletter in January.. Plus--I'll include some early history of Palm Desert that may not be in the P.D. book.

Signing off now,

DTE

October 2010

REMEMBER--THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOPES YOU WILL ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO COME AND JOIN THIS INTERESTING AND ENJOYABLE ORGANIZATION. EACH YEAR WE ADD NEW AND/OR DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES .THERE'S HARDLY A DULL MOMENT AROUND THE OLD FIREHOUSE!!

ALSO REMEMBER THAT ANY AND ALL OF YOUR DONATIONS TO THE HSPD ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE !!

HAPPY THANKSGIVING,
MERRY MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A VERY HEALTHY AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU
ALL!!!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2010

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

7:00 p.m. at the Portola Community Center

Bob Keeran of the Coachella Valley Water District

"Water and the Coachella Valley"

Don't miss this program.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2010

FALL LUNCHEON

MONTEREY COUNTRY CLUB

Social Hour:	**11:00 a.m.**
Lunch:	**12:00 p.m.**
Program:	**12:45 p.m.**

The speaker will be Hal Rover. The program will be a variation of the program he gives to local community groups. Don't miss this interesting presentation.

Luncheon: $45.00

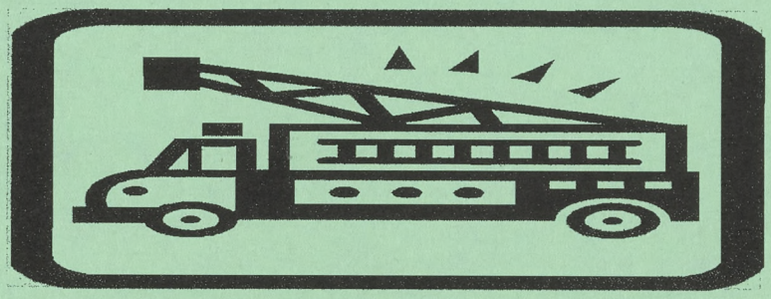
(benefitting the Historical Society Programs)

R.S.V.P 760.346.6588

ANNOUNCING

Historical Society of Palm Desert

Fire House Yard Sale



NOVEMBER 13-14, 2010
7AM TO 2PM

If you don't need it, ***WE DO!!***

Slightly used or not, interesting or rare

WE WILL TAKE IT!
WE ARE COLLECTING NOW!!

Please help us make this the best ever event!!!

You can drop your items off at ***The Historical Society***

At 72861 El Paseo Drive, Palm Desert or call for pick up

Please contact Adele at 760.772.9859/deliberger@aol.com or Anne at 760.346.6588

THANK YOU

Newsbits

WILSON DONATION

Thanks to Aurora Wilson and the Roy Wilson Supervisor 2010 Fund, we got some much needed financial support last spring. Roy was a good friend to the community and his passing came as a real shock to everyone.

DICK & GINNY FOLKERS

Dick and Ginny Folkers celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last spring. They held the event at the community center adjacent to the civic park. There was a very large turnout and a good time was had by all in attendance. Dick and Ginny asked that in lieu of gifts, donations be made to the society. Congratulations Dick and Ginny and thanks for the contributions in your name and also for all the time you have given to the society.

PALM DESERT BOOK

As you are all aware, we published a book on Palm Desert. It is available at the museum. We need to say thank you to the City of Palm Desert Visitor Center (Donna Gomez) for the assistance in getting the sales started and working with us in initially obtaining copies for us to sell at the museum. I should also mention that Hal Rover has been very busy with several local businesses in displaying and selling the books.

Historical Society of Palm Desert
PO Box 77
Palm Desert, CA 92261

Type to enter text